

## A New Light: Learning Guide!

### I. A New Light:

#### The story behind the song:

I knew that I wanted the album to be called “A New Light.” It has a Jewish element, a pun on my name, and it’s my first album, so it fit perfectly! Problem was, I didn’t have a song to go with it. (Which isn’t necessary, I know, but it would be nice.) So one night I sat down and decided to write one. And it became a kind of anthem

Shine a New Light on Zion,  
and may we all soon merit its radiance

אור חדש על ציון תאיר,  
ונזכה כלנו מהרה לאורו.

for me.

#### Source Text:

*Or Chadash* comes from the morning prayers, right before *Ahava Rabah*. The prayer itself is a plea to God for a new light to shine on Israel. This “new light” can be seen as peace, or the messianic age, which also involve “light” imagery. I’ve taken this line a bit out of context, however, and imagined it as a plea to each one of us. We each have a light to shine upon Zion, to add ourselves to the light of the Jewish people. Taking on tradition while simultaneously making it our own is the only way we’ve been able to survive for this long. It’s your book, it’s your tradition, and it has so much to offer. First you’ve got to open the book. Then shine your light!

Something to think about:

How will you “add your spark?” What “new light” will you shine on Judaism?

#### Lyrics:

The dusty pages of a worn in book  
don’t mean a thing unless you take a look  
it may seem faded, it may seem square  
but hidden inside, it has so much to share  
Passed on down, all through the line  
given different meanings in each space and time  
There is a spark it can ignite  
and all you gotta do is bring the light

Chorus:

Cause a new light to shine  
Cause a new light to shine  
Gotta get on up and say tradition is mine!  
cause a new light to shine  
cause a new light to shine

Once you've taken the time there's much you can find

In the Torah you can see  
The laws and stories of our history  
But it's just words, no matter how true,  
until you find the fire inside of you  
*L'dor v'dor* the tradition is passed  
we make it our own so we make it last  
(They say there's) 70 faces of the Torah to share  
just look in the mirror and you'll see one there

Chorus

(you gotta) Add your spark to the fire of our nation  
(you gotta) light the dark; add your voice to God's creation  
(you gotta) Be yourself and shine with all your might  
Add your own small light, keep the fire burning bright!

Shine, shine, shine a new light  
Shine, shine, keep it burning bright (x2)

*Or Chadah Al Tzion Tair V'nizkeh Kulanu M'heira L'oro*

## **2.B'ezrat Hashem**

Source Text:

*B'ezrat Hashem*, "with God's help," is a Jewish saying. For example:

"When do you start your new job?"

"*B'ezrat Hashem* next January."

"We're hoping for a productive quarter, *B'ezrat Hashem*."

The phrase *Baruch Hashem*, blessed is God, is used when there is certainty. (We are all healthy, *Baruch Hashem*.) But *B'ezrat Hashem* indicates a question, an uncertain future. Will I ace this test? Find a job? Buy this house? We don't always know, so we ask God for help.

The story behind the song:

This phrase used to bother me a bit. "Instead of asking God for help," I would think, "why don't you just do what you need to do?" But I found myself going through some tough personal times, not knowing what was going to happen, and afraid for what the future would hold. And I needed that help, I needed God. Then I understood. Sometimes, our lives are completely in our hands. But most of the time, our lives are up in the air, and it can be comforting to know that we can ask God for help. I know that it doesn't always turn out okay, but *B'ezrat HaShem*, it will.

Something to think about:

When have you ever asked God for help? How did that make you feel?

Lyrics:

There's a woman on my corner, barely has enough to eat  
Looks through all the trash and begs to all the people on the street  
But though it all she keeps a hopeful attitude  
And if you ask her if she's going to find food  
She'll answer

*B'ezrat Hashem*

*B'ezrat Hashem*

When the question's hard, she needs some help from God

*B'ezrat Hashem*

There's a man I know who's brilliant as can be  
Graduated top from Harvard  
But can't find a job in this economy  
He knows if he has faith he'll pull through in the end  
And if you ask if he will ever work again  
He'll answer...

*B'ezrat Hashem*

*B'ezrat Hashem*

When the question's hard, he needs some help from God

*B'ezrat Hashem*

Can I be my best? Can I pass the test?  
Will I win the race? Will I find my place?  
Can I find a friend? Can I love again?  
Will I see it though? Will I keep faith in you?

The future may bring joy, the future may bring pain  
We must learn to both appreciate the sunshine and the drops of falling rain  
But problems will work out, or so we have to pray  
And if you ask me will it all turn out okay, I'll answer...

*B'ezrat Hashem*

*B'ezrat Hashem*

When the question's hard, we need some help from God

*B'ezrat Hashem*

### **3. Tekiyah**

The story behind the song:

I like writing songs for objects, prayers, or moments in the calendar that aren't often sung about. And while there are many songs for *Rosh Hashanah*, and even *Yom Kippur*, there aren't many songs for the period in between, known as the "Aseret Yimei Tshuvah," the ten days of repentance. So I wrote one!

Source Text:

*Tekiyah* is one of the sounds of the *shofar*, the ram's horn that is blown during the month of *Elul* and the high holidays. The sound of the *shofar* is like an alarm, rousing us from our complacency and calling upon us to be better people. The time between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* is especially charged with this message. We have just experienced *Rosh Hashanah*, celebrated the new year, and reconfirmed our commitment to self-reflection and growth. Now we have ten days until *Yom Kippur*, a day of self-judgment and atonement. *Tekiyah*- don't you hear it calling you? The sound of the *shofar* fills your head, your gut, your heart, imploring you to make a new start. Will you heed its call?

Something to think about:

How do you feel when you hear the blast of the *shofar*? In your body, in your mind, in your soul?

Lyrics:

Wake up

Don't you hear it calling you

Arise and live your life anew

*Tekiyah*

Wake up

See the flaws inside your soul

Nurture them till you are whole

*Tekiyah*

This is the calling

This is the time to make things right

This is the warning

With the day of judgement now in sight

Wake up

Purge the grudges from your heart

Try to make a brand new start

*Tekiyah*

Wake up

Give the world all you can give

Love each moment that you live

*Tekiyah*

This is the warning

This is the time to make things right  
This is the calling  
With the day of judgement now in sight

Wake up  
Take the time to make amends  
Open up and start again  
*Tekiyah*

Wake up  
From your sorrow you are torn  
On this day you are reborn  
*Tekiyah*

This is the calling  
This is the time to make things right  
This is the warning  
With the day of judgement now in sight

#### **4. Voices**

##### The story behind the song:

When I was 16, I went on a summer program called Poland/ Israel Pilgrimage, run by United Synagogue Youth. Traveling through Poland, visiting the camps, the cemeteries, the old synagogues, was very powerful, but it didn't hit me until later, after we had been in Israel for a while. Our staff set aside a day for us to reflect on our experience through art. We could choose music, drama, or art, and I chose music. As I sat in the workshop, trying to make heads or tails of my experience, the words just poured out of me, and soon a song was created. This is that song.

##### Source text:

Seeing the sites of the atrocities of the Holocaust firsthand was a difficult, meaningful, and important experience. As time moves farther and farther away from the 1940s, there are less and less people who witnessed the atrocities first-hand. I remember the Holocaust survivors who came to speak at various school and synagogue programs, hearing their stories, and feeling responsible to carry on their memory. I wonder, when I am older, who will share their stories? Who will tell and retell, not to wallow in the past, but to learn from the world's mistakes? We will. We must hear their voices, sing their stories, hold our heads high. We are still here. We will never forget.

##### Something to think about:

How will you listen to their voices? What can you do to tell their stories?

### Lyrics:

Walking in a chill ran through me  
Whispered voices carried to me  
Thoughts of those who walked here lonely  
Too numb to scream, too cold to shout  
Seeking to express my feeling  
Body broke, emotions reeling  
Now I stand as testimony  
I walked in an also out

And I hear your voices (I can hear your voices)  
I can hear you call  
And I hear your voices (I can hear your voices)  
Reaching to us all

Looking back as someone hated  
Tortured beat up and berated  
Standing there my heart was pounding  
Frozen with the wind and fear  
Now today I stand here proudly  
Singing out their stories loudly  
Though the pain is still surrounding  
We can say that we're still here

And I hear your voices (I can hear your voices)  
I can hear you call  
And I hear your voices (I can hear your voices)  
Reaching to us all

### **5. Shalom Aleichem/ Peace to You**

#### The story behind the song:

Many of my songs come to me on *Shabbat*, probably because I'm singing and praying, and my head isn't filled with weekday worry. But I don't write on *Shabbat*, so this can prove to be a problem. This song is a case in point. After a great Friday night at Hillel at Brandeis, I was in my apartment getting ready for bed. And as I was brushing my teeth, I started humming a tune. And then singing a song. And then feeling that pang of dread- how am I ever going to remember this?! But I let it keep me company until Saturday night, when I rushed to get it recorded and write all the lyrics down. And here it is!

#### Source text:

The word *Shalom*, as taught in Hebrew school, means three things: hello, goodbye, and peace. But this isn't completely true. *Shalom* just means peace, and we wish peace to people when we see them and leave them. My dad loved this concept. "It's like the Israelites were a bunch of hippies, saying 'peace, man!' to everybody!" And I love it too! *Shalom Aleichem*, the title of the traditional

*Shabbat* song, literally means “peace to you,” and is a traditional greeting, answered with “*Aleichem Shalom!*” At the *Shabbat* table, we sing to the angels, but in this song, we are singing to each other. Peace to you!

Something to think about:

What does it mean to wish someone peace? How can you wish peace to someone?

Lyrics:

When you come and when you go  
Peace to you  
When you reap and when you sow  
Peace to you  
When you give and when you take  
Peace to you  
When you sleep and when you wake  
Peace to you

Chorus:

*Shalom Aleichem*  
*Malachei Hashareit*  
*Malachei Elyon*  
*Malachei Elyon*  
*Mi Melech*  
*Malchei Hamlachim*  
*HaKadosh Baruch Hu*  
*Hakadosh Baruch Hu*  
*Peace to you*

When you hear and when you speak  
Peace to you  
When you're strong and when you're weak  
Peace to you  
When you think and when you pray  
Peace to you  
Every breath and every day  
Peace to you

Chorus

When you love and when you learn  
Peace to you  
When you have and when you yearn  
Peace to you  
When you laugh and when you grieve  
Peace to you

When you enter and when you leave  
Peace to you

Chorus

## 6. Zeh Hayom

### The story behind the song:

I have always loved this quote. It shows up in the *Hallel* service, which I said at my Bat Mitzvah. I even had it engraved on a ring! (which then fell into the Atlantic Ocean, but that's another story...) I decided to use it to try my hand at a fun, upbeat pop song with an empowering message (and an 80s sound, my favorite!)

### Source text:

“This is the day the Lord has made; be happy and rejoice in it!” Psalm 118:24

This quote, from psalms, is a part of the celebratory *Hallel* service. Since we say *Hallel* on holidays and *Rosh Chodesh*, it could be inferred that “this day” is a holiday, something that only comes around every once and a while. But Psalms can be said all the time! And we don't know what day the psalmist was writing on. So that must mean that “this day” is today! Today is the day that God has made. Just for you!

### Something to think about:

How would you live your life differently if you believed today was made just for you?

### Lyrics:

Today is my day to shine  
Today the whole world is mine  
I'm swimming in a wondrous sea of  
Endless possibility  
Today I'm calling the shots  
Today I'll smile a lot  
I've got to live today like it's the only one I've got

Chorus

*Zeh Hayom Asah Hashem Nagilah Vnismecha Bo* (x2)

My future's starting right here  
Today it's perfectly clear  
I need to be all I can be  
Because this day was made for me  
I'll take my problems in stride  
I'll use my heart as my guide  
I'll live today out loud because  
I've got nothing to hide

Chorus

God made today for us to do all that we can  
To dance to sing to laugh  
To try to take a stand  
So always do your best and give all you can give  
Today is yours to take  
Today is yours to live!

Chorus

## **7. Identity/Community**

The story behind the song:

In the summer of 2011, I was privileged to be an intern at the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, housed at Brandeis University. Each member of the program assisted a researched (I sorted primary sources on Frida Kahlo,) and worked on a project of their choice on Judaism and gender. It was a chance to do something creative, to combine my passion for Sociology (my college major) with art. I conducted interviews with a few friends and learned about their Jewish journeys, as well as their thoughts on egalitarianism. Those conversations turned into poems, dance pieces, and this song.

Source text:

Though this song contains no Hebrew, the tension it presents is a part of our history and our present. Although personal prayer is acceptable, a *minyán*, a quorum of ten, is required to say certain prayers like the mourner's kaddish. Hillel is quoted in *Pirkei Avot* as saying, "do not separate yourself from the community (2:5)." But he also says in that same book, "if I am not for myself, who will be for me? (1:14)." It's clear from trends in Jewish life that this tension is still with us. If we remain completely steadfast in our own beliefs and practices, will we end up "doing Judaism" alone? If we find others to do it with, will we need to compromise who we are as individuals?

Something to think about:

Where do you feel the most at home in the Jewish world? Where do you feel the most alienated? How do you strike a balance between your own identity and community?

Lyrics:

This journey I've been on  
has led me down so many roads  
that I don't know which way to go  
cause I get so turned around  
I'm just trying to figure out  
How to be most like myself,

cause there's no "me" anymore  
so I just keep looking down  
There's got to be a place out there for me  
Where I won't have to compromise the person I can be:

Chorus: Who I am, Who I was, Who I will be  
All I want is to sing my own song  
Where I am, Where I was, Where I'm going,  
All I want is somewhere to belong,  
Somewhere to belong

The past was once a rock,  
something solid in my step  
and it kept me on the way  
that I knew would lead me right  
But words I can't believe  
shoot my certainty with holes  
And the questions fill my soul  
and it makes me want to fight  
but somehow I am drawn back to the things I knew  
Can I believe myself and still believe in You?

Chorus:

Bridge:  
If we are all unique,  
how can we come together?  
If we don't share a name,  
than what can we become?  
Can I just shine my light,  
or can I help your light shine brighter?  
Can I search alongside you, take the journey with you?

Chorus:  
Who we are, Who we were, Who we will be  
All we want is to sing our own song  
Where we are, Where we were, Where we're going,  
All we want is somewhere to belong,  
Oh, all I want is somewhere to belong  
Somewhere to belong

## 8. Sukkat Shalom

### The story behind the song:

Songs are great at keeping me company. One particular night on the way home from Friday night dinner, this song popped into my head. The tune wrapped around me like a hug, and the words reminded me that I wasn't alone.

### Source text:

Imagine you're a shepherd in the ancient world. Every day is the same: wake up, run around with sheep, go to sleep. It's so boring! But *Shacharit*, the morning service, says "*mechadesh b'chol tamid ma'aseh Bereishit.*" God renews creation every day! Every day is new, with the potential to be exciting and different! Now imagine that after a long day of shepherding, the sun goes down and it's almost time for bed. But you can't relax- there are wolves! thieves! The night is a dark and scary place. But *ma'ariv*, the evening service, reminds you that God is "*m'sader ha'cochavim.*" God places the stars, commands the cycle of nature, and spreads a *sukkat shalom*, a shelter of peace, over the whole world. There is order in the world, and everything will be okay. *Barcuh ata Hashem, ma'ariv aravim.* Blessed are you God, who brings on the evening dusk.

### Something to think about:

What makes you feel safe? Where is your shelter of peace?

### Lyrics:

The stars above me blinking  
they must know just what I'm thinking  
"it's so empty and so cold alone at night"

The wind whips up around me  
and I'm kinda glad it's found me  
cause when it blows, I know I'll be alright

A kiss from God with each little leaf that drops upon my head  
oh how small we all must feel when the sky becomes our blanket  
and the ground below becomes our bed

### Chorus:

But in this  
Sukkat Shalom  
Your love surrounds me  
Sukkat Shalom  
and it's all around me  
I know I'm safe and protected  
in this world that is Your home  
Your Sukkat Shalom

The sky is getting dimmer

but I still can see a glimmer  
of a sliver of the moon to light my way  
There is no one beside me  
And I have no map to guide me  
But even so I know I'll be okay

The world seems scary and confused each time it drifts into the dark  
But I know that you are there, Your light can fill the air  
And all it takes is just one spark

Chorus:

Outro: *Baruch Ata Hashen Ma'ariv Aravim*

## **9. Jerusalem my Home**

The story behind the song:

When I was 16, I went on a summer trip to Poland and Israel with United Synagogue Youth. It was an incredible, challenging, and fun experience with lots of new friends. The most powerful night of the trip was Tisha B'ay, the day when we mourn the destruction of the Temple, Jerusalem, and the fragmenting of our people. Our group read Eicah, Lamentations, overlooking the old city. The haunting voices of the Muslim call to prayer greeted us and led us home. We overlooked the stones, the sun fading into the sky over this city that had seen so much devastation. I was so overwhelmed with a deep sadness I didn't know what to do. Back at the hostel, we were given time to reflect. I got out my notebook and began to write. A poem poured out of me, a love poem to this beautiful city of gold that deserved to be shining with peace. All of a sudden I jumped up and ran to find my friend Ari. He was strumming his guitar. "Play something!" I cried. "Play what?" He said, confused. "Anything! I think this is a song!" And it was.

Source text:

Jerusalem has been a part of the Jewish psyche for millennia. As the location of the first and second holy Temples, Jerusalem was the nexus of Jewish civil and spiritual life. We pray facing Jerusalem and we pray for its restoration. But even though Jews are sovereign in their land once again, we cannot stop praying. Jerusalem will not be whole until it is truly *Yerushalayim Ha'Bnuyah*, the rebuilt Jerusalem. Not in a physical sense, but a spiritual one. There will be no rest for this city until there is peace. I sing a love song for the Jerusalem of our dreams, the Jerusalem that deserves so much more, the people who deserve more. The song is melancholy on purpose- it is not a victory cheer, but a hug filled with sadness, a hope and a wish that Jerusalem may know peace again.

Lyrics:

My heart leapt up in joy when I first gazed upon your face.  
I thanked *Hashem* that he had brought us safely to this place.  
I kissed the ground, I kissed the sky, I sang with all my might,  
And prayed to God that I would be found worthy in your sight.

Chorus:

Jerusalem, my city,  
Jerusalem, my home.  
Within these walls I've found a place  
That I can call my own.

My love for you is deeper than the whole of the Dead Sea.  
My love for you is higher than the hills of Galilee,  
As solid as Masada and as bright as Tel Aviv.  
With all this love I have for you how can I bear to leave?

Chorus

The beauty of your city overtakes me and I cry.  
Your holiness and spirit overtakes me and I sigh.  
Your majesty and glory firmly rooted in my soul,  
Only when I'm with you can I say I'm truly whole.

Chorus